

# **Learn and Serve Montana Demonstration Grant – 2003-2006**

## **Overview**

Learn and Serve Montana is a Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) funded program designed to meet the needs of a sparsely populated state to help students grow into responsible, competent adults who are equipped to participate in a democratic society. Service-learning students, in partnership with their communities, will have an opportunity to acquire the essential attitudes, knowledge and skills to be lifelong learners and to be contributing citizens who value the richness of diversity.

The 2003-06 Learn and Serve Montana program will help create school and community environments that value the richness of diversity and support academic performance, interpersonal and civic skills, historical and environmental knowledge. The grant seeks to address widely identified issues of multiculturalism, cultural awareness, lack of knowledge of the unique history of local communities and how their history links to present day issues, and a trend away from civic participation in the democratic process through a high-quality service-learning model.

Five Regional Demonstration Centers (RDC) were chosen through a sub-granting process to pilot the program.

- Hardin School District, Hardin, Montana
- Lewistown Junior High, Lewistown, Montana
- Lockwood School, Billings, Montana
- Plentywood School District, Plentywood, Montana
- Sentinel High School, Missoula, Montana

While each RDC has chosen to pursue projects that are unique to their community, each places great importance upon making strong links between service projects and the academic curriculum and Montana Content and Performance Standards. These connections create powerful learning opportunities for students, bringing life to the curriculum and create leadership opportunities for youth to positively transform their communities.

## **Service-Learning Project Highlights:**

Service-Learning projects currently underway in Montana clearly demonstrate how service-learning enables students to meet academic standards in unique ways that also build student skills that span other curriculum areas.

### **Hardin School District, Hardin, Montana**

#### *Friends of the Depot*

37 Hardin Students have been involved in an effort to restore the Hardin train depot and a historical centennial car. The students have raised \$2,330.50 of the \$4,500 needed to move the train car. Big Horn County Commissioners provided the remainder of the funds to complete the fundraising effort.

#### *Historical Mapping through Modern Technology*

60 Hardin middle and high school students are also involved in a project that uses Geographic Information Systems technology to produce historical maps of Hardin, Montana. The maps provide well-researched information about all historical buildings and links to digital photography. This information is a significant contribution to the historical data available to the community.

### **Lewistown Junior High, Lewistown, Montana**

Lewistown middle school, a National Service-Learning Leader School is expanding service learning throughout central Montana. Recently, Hobson High School created a science-mentoring program. High school students have created science labs for elementary students and mentor the younger students during weekly lab-sessions. The project increases student voice, builds leadership skills, and helps create a sense of civic responsibility. It also helps to further educate all grade levels in the sciences and builds a generation of knowledgeable science students.

### **Lockwood School, Billings, Montana**

#### *Documenting School History Project*

A group of middle school students are helping to document the history of Lockwood school for future generations by researching, organizing, and compiling the history into a digital product. These students are also involved in an outreach project to teach additional schools how to pursue such a project.

#### *Outdoor Classroom Project*

A group of middle school students are involved in a project that seeks to create an outdoor classroom area for the primary staff and students. Students are currently developing plans for the classroom and ensuring compliance with the American Disabilities Act. The project will resume during the 2005-06 school year.

#### *National Youth Service Week*

Lockwood students developed and carried out a large-scale service project to restore the elementary school playground during youth service week. The project, which was connected to the health curriculum, involved weeks of planning and three days of service where 411 middle school students restored the playground, making it a safe place for younger students to play.

### **Plentywood School District, Plentywood, Montana**

During the 2003-2004 School Year, Plentywood school students who were studying state and county seals realized that Sheridan County did not have a county seal. These students set out to change that fact. Through research, art work, and plenty of collaboration, the students worked with the county commissioners who have chosen to adopt the student-developed seal.

### **Sentinel High School, Missoula, Montana**

Two projects at Sentinel High school highlight the great impact service-learning can have upon the community.

#### *Homestead Project*

Given the knowledge that the Missoula community benefits in multiple ways from the historic Randolph-Moon homestead site; twelve students (ten with disabilities) spent five hours each preparing and learning pruning, gardening and maintenance. Those students spent eight hours each in service at the site on National Youth Service Day in April of 2005. During post-activity reflection, students cited feelings of civic engagement and community pride. A news article about this particular project is available on this website.

#### *Nursery Playground Project*

Parenting teens at Missoula County Public Schools are likely to drop out of school before graduation. One challenge to parenting teens' continued enrollment is that the school nursery is licensed only for infants up to two years old. The restricted license is based on lack of outdoor play available for children at the school nursery. Provided with that knowledge, ten students from the Woods II / Carpentry Class and the Child Development and Young Families program are working on planning and constructing a playground area for the nursery. The project requires more than building skills – to successfully complete the project, students will need to understand building codes, local laws, how to negotiate with decision-makers, budgeting, purchasing, planning, constructing, among a variety of other necessary academic and life skills. The project will be complete in the Fall of 2005 to the benefit of teen parents and youngsters alike.